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THE "A. F." PAMPHLET SERIES

HORSE-RACING A CRUEL SPORT

BY

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HORSE - RACING

A CRUEL SPORT

HORSE-RACING is very generally regarded by the more thoughtful sections of the community as a low and undesirable pastime, mixed up, as it is, with betting, and often carried on by unscrupulous methods. The racing stable is not considered the best of training places for boys, and the racecourse is one of the last places which any father wishes his son to frequent.

Objection is, however, very seldom raised to horse-racing on account of the cruelties involved in it, at any rate in England. It is true that on the Continent the P.C.A. Societies often include it amongst the forms of cruelty which they exist to oppose, but in England we are so accustomed to it from infancy, and it is so generally recognised as a national sport, that we have lost the power of judging it impartially or even fairly, and to bring an accusation against it, even amongst sober-minded, unsporting people, or even ladies, lays one open to the charge of being fanciful and unpatriotic, and almost a traitor to one's country.

But what are the facts? Anyone who will take the trouble to look critically over the accounts published daily in the papers of the horse-races and steeple-chases—which we include in our indictment—will find that the painful accidents and injuries sustained by the horses, which the reporters think worthy of chronicling, run in a short time into hundreds.

A member of the Humanitarian League some years ago kept a watch on the papers, and made out a list—which made no claim to be a complete one—for fourteen weeks, and found that in that time, among the more serious accidents to horses, 160 fell, forty-five “came to grief,” eleven broke down, seven broke blood-vessels, seven broke legs, one broke his back, seven were destroyed in consequence of accidents, and one died from internal injuries in training.

We give the chronicle for one month as follows:—

“*March*.—Fifty-three horses fell; one was ‘remounted, and came to grief two fences further on’; one ‘was remounted and afterwards refused’; one ‘rolled over from sheer distress’; ‘the favourite at the time of falling was in obvious difficulties’; seven came to grief; seven were in trouble; five broke bloodvessels—‘two being in hopeless difficulties at the time; one afterwards struggled on’; four broke down (two ‘badly’); two refused—‘hurdle several times refused’; one ‘broke a leg and was destroyed’; one ‘veteran chaser dislocated his back and was destroyed’; one ‘that fell and injured her back, January 19, has been in slings ever since, and not likely to get about again.’ March 5: One horse ‘ran into the rails’; one ‘in hopeless trouble’; one ‘struggling on’; one ‘just scrambled home’; ‘the Grand National candidate could hardly crawl in the last stages of the conflict’; one ‘was so thoroughly beaten he could hardly walk into the paddock’; ‘so distressed he could hardly crawl’; one ‘failed to show up prominently with her crushing burden on the heavy ground’; another ‘jumped badly, suffering from the effects of the rough passage across the Irish Channel’; a ‘Grand National candidate, in a training gallop, got a fatal internal injury’; ‘disasters commenced early as usual in the Grand National’; ‘out of twenty-eight, less than half completed the course’; another day, ‘of the twenty-eight runners, nine only completed the course.’ It was said of one horse, ‘it has been

shown that he doesn't like to race every day of the week'; three dead."

We may here at the outset answer the stock argument of those who have given no thought to the subject, that the horses themselves enjoy racing. In substantiation of this, a case was recently quoted to us of a horse who, having got rid of his rider, still continued in the race, and came in first.

We quite agree that many animals have a racing instinct, and enjoy it up to a certain point if they are allowed to do it in their own way; and if there is any truth in the stories one has heard, of the Arabs and their horses and the way they will race for fun, urged on only by the master's voice, we should say by all means let both men and animals have their amusement. But this is not at all our system. The horses, who are still in at the latter part of the race, are simply mercilessly flogged, and are also spurred in a way which in other circumstances would be regarded as brutal in a high degree and would be visited with rigorous penalties. Such phrases as "collapsing," being "dead-beat," or "severely punished," which occur constantly in all accounts of race-meetings, are hardly consistent with enjoyment. When Dorando ran at Olympia till he could only stagger along in a dazed condition and fell on the course, there was a great outcry about the pitiful sight, and the folly and wickedness of carrying sport so far. But what he did was done of his own free will. What are we to think of the humanity of forcing horses into a similar condition by whip and spur against their will?

To show more in detail the kind of treatment to which horses are subjected in this amusement, we append a few cases noted in casual reading of the daily papers during about one month.

DONCASTER RACES.—"Queen's Journal fell lame during the race for the Rufford Abbey Plate."—*Evening Standard*, Sept. 8.

WINDSOR RACES.—“Dibs had his usual muzzle on in the paddock, but behaved quietly, and it was not until he was lined up behind the tapes that he began his pranks.

“Sir Charles Nugent, his trainer, was behind him with a long whip, and the horse knew he would not be afraid to use it, so he dare not go backwards, as he did at Ascot and at Doncaster. Dibs has reason to know that whip. He learnt what it was when he got back from Doncaster.

“He played the same game on his own Downs at the starting-gate when he got back from Doncaster the other day, and then and there he received from Sir Charles Nugent the lesson he needed.

“It was to be a question for the remainder of his racing career whether the man won or the horse won, and anyone who knows Sir Charles Nugent will scarcely need to be told that the winner was not the horse.”—*Scotsman*, Sept. 22.

PERTH RACES.—“At the Perth Meeting yesterday, Belford Lass and Red Clover fell at the water while contesting the Fair Maid’s Steeplechase, and were subsequently destroyed. It was also found necessary to destroy Kilimanjaro, who came down badly in the Glenearn Hurdle Handicap, as well as Lychnobite, who pulled up lame.”—*Evening Standard*, Sept. 24.

WOLVERHAMPTON RACES.—“Markinch fell, and was subsequently destroyed.”—*Daily Express*, Sept. 27.

NEWMARKET RACES.—“Cardinal Beaufort could not go the pace at the offset, and was soon under the whip, but to no purpose.”—*Daily Mirror*, Sept. 28.

NEWMARKET RACES.—“Lord Falmouth’s Lady’s Mantle, winner of the valuable Champion Breeders’ Foal Stakes at Derby, finished third, but on her return to the Birdcage suddenly faltered and fell down dead.”—*Times*, October 12.

There is no pretence here that the whip is spared, or even that it should be spared. On the contrary, the

theory and practice seem to be that if a horse does not do all that is required of him, he deserves a sound hiding, and gets it.

Not in England only but in all countries where Englishmen are, is this heartless ill-treatment of horses carried on under the name of sport. In the Indian papers quoted in the *ANIMALS' FRIEND*, May, 1911, we find the following cases.

In an account of their Grand National (India) :

“Gerard nearly fell when being pulled up, and then it was found the game horse had fought out the race on three legs, having broken his off fore pastern, and his owner had reluctantly to consent to the friendly bullet putting an end to his career.”

And of another horse, Dundee :

“The poor horse struggled up, but it was found he had broken a leg, and he, too, was mercifully sent to join Gerard in the happy hunting-grounds beyond.”

In the Lucknow races :

“Pinfire was going well in the race till, as shown below, she fractured her fetlock-joint, and had to be destroyed. The next unfortunate incident was the fall of Blue Flame, owned by Mr. J. Scott, in the succeeding race, when the horse unaccountably slipped near the three-furlongs post and broke her leg below the knee, and her sufferings were speedily terminated by a friendly bullet. The bodies of the two animals lay alongside the rails during the progress of the rest of the racing.”

We have much more of the same sort of evidence, but anyone can collect it for himself by watching the daily papers for a few weeks, or even days, when race-meetings are being held.

With regard to this use of the whip—while we believe that the best and most successful jockeys are opposed to

its unlimited and reckless use, the majority of horses necessarily cannot come under the most experienced and most humane riders. In this, as in all other pastimes and trades, the cruelty might undoubtedly be greatly lessened if the people employed were themselves more humane, but we have to face the fact that, as in the slaughtering of cattle, so in the riding of horses, the work is not done, and never will be done, by a refined section of the community, and it is quite certain that there always will be great cruelty as long as it is carried on at all.

The intention of the writer in the Badminton volume on " Racing " is no doubt good when he says :

" When the whip is wanted to drive a game and willing horse to make the supreme effort in a race, it is worse than useless to begin to flog him half a mile from the post."

But he practically admits that flogging a horse for half a mile from the winning-post is not an unusual occurrence. Similarly, in the volume of the same series on " Riding," we find the following opinions of two well-known jockeys.

George Fordham is quoted as saying :

" The boys whip a horse a mile from home ; sometimes as we have been going in a race, I've seen them begin, and I've said to them : ' How the deuce do you expect to get him home if you're whipping him now ? ' Again, with regard to young horses : ' If they have not been taught their business, it is very certain you cannot teach them on a race-course. Poor little brutes, they look at you sometimes, if they can't go the pace, to see if you are going to hit them ; they turn their heads and look at you, they do, expecting the whip. They are outpaced, they can't go any faster, and they dread they are going to catch it.' "

And Tom Cannon writes :

“That unfortunate whip loses such a lot of races—more especially on young horses. No one knows what a number of two-year-olds are ruined by the whip and spurs boys are always using. It’s cruel and, besides, does no good at all. See a two-year-old come out on the course and go down to the post, listening and looking about him. He ran last week and was hided, and he was out the day before yesterday, and here he is once more, and he knows he has got to run and be hided again. What are the consequences? He is too nervous to put out his full powers, and then when he gets back to the stables, timorous and trembling, he won’t eat, and what’s worse, he won’t drink. As I sit in my saddle I can feel their hearts against my leg, beat! beat! beat! bump! bump! bump! Then when a careless or clumsy boy is on them they get a bad start after all, and out comes that blessed whip, and they go whipping and bumping all over the course.”

It may be asked why, if there is cruelty, the offenders are not prosecuted and punished. The answer to this is that the P.C.A. Societies can work only on certain conventional lines and with due respect to public prejudices. Before the passing of the new Protection of Animals Act, 1911, evidence of cruelty was not sufficient to obtain conviction. It was necessary, in addition, to show some intention of inflicting it, or that it was unnecessary for the objects in view. Under the new Act—by which it is a penal offence to “cruelly beat, kick, ill-treat, override . . . or terrify any animal”—we think the treatment on the racecourse must be a penal offence, and we call on the R.S.P.C.A. to bring in a test case.

We append a report from the *Times* of two cases brought into court under the old Act which are instructive :

“Two jockeys, D—— and N——, were summoned for cruelly ill-treating horses at Sandown Park races. An

inspector of the R.S.P.C.A. said that he was at Sandown on the day in question and saw the defendant, who had ridden in the two-mile hurdle race, coming into the paddock. The witness saw him strike his horse several unnecessary blows with a whip, which he thought was cruelty. The horse had been sufficiently punished in the race, which it had lost. When the defendant struck the horse it swerved. It appeared to be distressed after the race. On the suggestion of Sir Thomas Bucknill, who could not attend to give evidence, he reported the case. Replying to the Chairman of the Bench, the witness said the defendant struck the horse very hard about three times. The defendant's explanation was that the animal would not try in the race, in which it was beaten, and that he did not intend to hurt it. The witness said that there was no reason for the blows. D—— was fined 10s. and costs.

“ Dealing with the other case the inspector said that the defendant rode his horse in the same race, finishing fourth. N—— was passing from the course to the paddock when he struck the horse on the side four times with the butt end of his whip and the horse swerved. The animal was even more distressed than the other. Mr. Justice Bucknill complained to the witness also of this case. The defendant, in answer to the Chairman, said that the horse was very awkward, and he had to give her one to keep her quiet. Another inspector of the R.S.P.C.A., stated that he saw the defendant afterwards, when he said: ‘I don’t deny that I hit the horse on the side of the head to steady it.’ The horse was brought up and the defendant mounted it, and it immediately started buck-jumping. The defendant’s employer gave him a good character. The witness added that N—— also said: ‘I lost my temper.’ N—— had never ill-treated a horse before. The Chairman said that the defendant seemed to have behaved in a brutal way to the horse, and he would be fined 20s.”

These cases are, we say, instructive. It is true that they were given against the defendants, but that is accounted

for by the fact that the cruelty did not take place on the actual course, but in paddocks adjoining. In one case we are told that "The horse had been sufficiently punished in the race," this "punishment" in the race being held quite legitimate and as something of which no one could reasonably complain. In the other case the jockey admitted to having lost his temper—as though that was sufficient excuse for the cruelty.

One may wonder how many similar cases occur when there is no Mr. Justice Bucknill to draw attention to them.

We add another case of prosecution for cruelty, which took place on the actual course, and was unsuccessful :

"Inspector —, of the R.S.P.C.A., stated that he was on duty at the Grindon Hunt Races. He saw the finish of the fifth race. During the last sixty or seventy yards, although Dewdrop the Second was leading by many lengths, and proved an easy winner, the defendant was violently spurring the mare, and in addition was flogging it with the whip. The horse won, yet the spurring and beating was continued for fully fifty or sixty yards after the winning post. The mare was ridden into the paddock, and P. S. Scott came to witness and made a complaint to him. Together they went into the paddock, where they saw defendant dismount. As he was going into the weighing-room witness noticed that the inside of his breeches were smeared with blood. Witness examined the mare, and found its sides badly lacerated by the spur, and particularly on the near side. There were a number of spur cuts, some of them an inch long and very deep. The adjoining flesh was saturated with blood. In addition to the spur cuts there were several weal marks from the whip on the sides and shoulders. In witness's opinion excessive violence was used, and the mare suffered great and unnecessary pain. Witness afterwards saw defendant. He asked him what he had to say as to his treatment of the mare, and the reply he made was: 'Have you ever

seen a racehorse win a race without it being thrashed ?' Witness had seen many races, but had never seen a horse ill-treated like this one. Defendant further told witness that he must have backed the second horse and lost, and was just telling a lot of —— lies. Defendant also held his purse up, and said he could fight as well as the Society.

"For the defence, Mr. C—— said the horse had some blood on it, but only from spur pricks. It was admitted that the spur was a lawful instrument to use on certain horses. It was necessary to spur this particular horse at the hurdles, and also to give it a little reminder coming up the straight. The spurs used by defendant were short in the rowels, and were incapable of inflicting such wounds as alleged. They would only cause pricks, which certainly did not amount to cruelty. The horse was notoriously lazy, and required a little persuasion. This persuasion was administered by a skilful man in a skilful manner, and without any cruelty whatever.

"J. Deans, veterinary, Newcastle, deposed that there were no spur wounds on the mare, only slight spur pricks, and these were not joined one with another.

"The Bench dismissed the case, and allowed the costs of defendant's witnesses."

Here the flogging and spurring were admitted, and the defence made was that "the spur is a lawful instrument to use on certain horses," and that this particular horse required "a little persuasion," which was administered without any cruelty whatever—in spite of the fact that the flesh around was said to be "saturated with blood." The defendant also entirely gave away his case, from the humane point of view, when he pleaded that no race was ever won without the horse being thrashed !

Yet such is the state of public opinion and morality in this matter that the defence was allowed and the case dismissed !

The fact is that we have one morality for the high road and quite another for the racecourse. If a horse is

flogged on the road so as to cause wounds or weals the driver has a poor chance of getting off, but if the same, or much worse, is done on the racecourse, the action is part of the game, and no magistrate will convict. If the magistrates did convict in such cases, horse-racing would come to an end at once, and that is why they are afraid to do so, and the horses must go on suffering. It is only additional evidence, if that is wanted, how man's laws with reference to animals are based, not on their feelings or their right to fair treatment, but on his own convenience. The savage is still strong in us, and the conception of the savage is that animals were made for man, and that their feelings are not worthy of any consideration. It is only gradually and very slowly that it is dawning on us that animals have any rights apart from man's convenience and pleasure. Wherever their interests clash with our gains or games, there is evidence on all sides that each step has to be fought by their friends, and it is time that some determined stand should be made against the heartless cruelty of this selfish and demoralising form of pastime—horse-racing.

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